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**Date:** 4/21/98 1:36pm  
**Subject:** Local Phone Service

96-98

Federal Communications Commission

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**RECEIVED**

**APR 21 1998**

**Message:**

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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April 20, 1998

The Federal Communications Commission  
Common Carrier Bureau  
Consumer Complaints Division  
1919 M Street N.W.  
Washington DC 20554

Re: casual billing by MCI via Pac Bell on our three  
phone numbers

Note: I will not name the names of the individuals with  
whom I dealt because I am afraid they will  
be made scapegoats by management for a problem that I  
think they did their best to resolve.

Dear Sir or Madam:

As of February of 1998, my wife and I began to receive  
MCI casual billings for tolls calls on all three of our Pacific  
Bell bills. We subscribe to two residential lines (415 821  
2090 and 415 821 5389, as well as one fax/business line  
415 282 2369). Our interstate carrier is Wealthcom, to  
whom we have subscribed for at least a year with no  
problem. As an item of information, some time last year  
Wealthcom was bought by Buyers United. However this  
did not interfere with the quality of the service they  
provided us AT THAT TIME.

When in February I complained to Wealthcom/Buyers  
United about the casual billings, they said I should take it

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up with Pacific Bell. When I took it up with Pacific Bell, they said I should discuss it with Wealthcom/Buyers United. I put them both together on a conference call and we then talked about PIC codes. The WC/BU person admitted there had been some sort of change in PIC codes, and we were able, theoretically, to sort out the PIC code problem. My time involved in these calls back and forth, plus "waiting in line" on line, amounted to roughly two hours.

The WC/BU person then said I should fax my MCI billings to an MCI fax number and they would be "taken care of." I did that, and delayed payment on the bill.

When my March bill arrived, the problem seemed to have increased. I was being casually billed by MCI for hundreds of interstate as well as some international calls at rates far higher than WC/BU's rates. Once again I got on the phone, and only by conferencing calling with all three carriers did we finally decide that the problem involved some sort of changeover of PIC codes. The WC/BU person, said that there had been a switchover from purchasing long distance lines from MCI and that in the process "a thousand or so customers had had the same sort of trouble." A person at Pacific Bell's business subscribers' service very kindly said that if I would fax her some sample billings from WC/BU, she would recalculate the rates for the interstate and international calls. I fax'd her the sample billings. My time spent, including "waiting in line" on line, amounted to roughly another two hours.

When my April 5th statements arrived, the 415 821-2090 number still showed a large number of casual billings, this I presume because the person at Pacific Bell's business subscribers' service only recalculated the 415 282 2369 business line, (although I do believe she said she would let the residential people know). Once more I got on a conference call with both the person at WC/BU and Pac Bell. This time the person at WC/BU admitted that the "trouble" was serious enough that their attorneys allegedly were talking with MCI's legal department. Once more we chatted about PIC codes. It seemed that on the two residential lines, the PIC codes had not been updated to the one that WC/BU was now using (since switching from purchasing their lines from MCI). They were now using #10948 under Switch Services Communications. Pac Bell promised to take care of changing me over from the previous PIC code (still on my residential lines) at 'no charge.' They also said they would recalculate all the casual calls, and I gave them the going WC/BU rates overseas and interstate, with the person at WC/BU's help. I did not phone MCI for this April go-round.

Now we come to the crux of the matter. Although Pac Bell could adjust the casual billings and credit me the difference, they could not give me an itemized list of the actual calls made at the recalculated rate! Obviously someone had to sit down and do the itemized recalculation. Why couldn't I have a print-out? "No," I was told, "only MCI had the database," and the print-out would

have to come from them. I actually did, at this point, telephone MCI, who told me that since I was not one of their subscribers, they did not even have me on any sort of record. Roughly another two hours spend on this, the third go-round.

I seem to be basically stuck with accepting Pac Bell's "readjustment" of the casual billing rates to reflect WC/BU's rates, with no way (short of sitting down with an adding machine and re-figuring my bills, thus exactly duplicating Pac Bell's work) to check their figures. Inasmuch as I've already wasted six-plus hours over a period of three months over the incredible inefficiency and foul-ups of these carriers, I'm not too eager to add more of my time to this problem.

What I would like, either from Pac Bell or WC/BU or MCI or all three, is a sincere and abject apology for their total messing-up of my phone service. Also, I really require an adjusted ITEMIZED billing for my interstate and international calls that I can, like any other normal and reasonable telephone customer, compare against my earlier wrong billings and my own records. I also would like some recognition from the carriers involved that MY time is very valuable (and not to be spent on hold and, on several occasions, actually dropped off the circuit so that I was 'off the hook' for minutes before I realized a recorded message came on telling me to hang up and try again). As a consultant to various groups I bill my time at \$100/hour, so I don't see why I should not receive a \$600 credit towards my future bills that reflects the annoyance and weariness I suffered throughout this whole procedure. Also, the \$600 credit hopefully might act as a financial incentive for those in charge of these phone services to provide their customers with a reasonable facsimile of the reliability that we, in the distant past, once enjoyed.

I also would hope that the copies of this letter I am sending to Pacific Bell and WC/BU and MCI (of whom I am a customer via their e-mail service, by the way) will reach all the way to top levels of management of ALL their organizations. Something is seriously wrong with the way telephone customers are being served in this country, and I don't believe that I'm the only one that feels that way.

Sincerely,

Ramsn Sender  
Executive Director

CC: Pacific Bell, Wealthcom/Buyers United, MCI  
e-mail copies to:

Chairman William Kennard  
Commissioner Susan Ness  
Commissioner Harold Furchtgott-Roth  
Commissioner Michael Powell  
Commissioner Gloria Tristani